

WILDLIFE, WILD FOOD, FOOD SECURITY AND HUMAN SOCIETY

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From early history, wildlife played a critical role in the emergence of earth's most successful mammal species Homo sapiens. Exploitation of wild food, through hunting was the main evolutionary driver of upright, running human beings and critical to the species nutritional health, early expansion and growth. In contrast, the recently growing population has been sustained through domestication of species for food and industrialisation of agricultural systems without taking natural capital into account. This paper critically evaluates this strategy and presents evidence that modern systems are not necessarily optimal and are in fact undermining long term food security and health of the planet and people. There are disturbing trends, unprecedented loss of biodiversity, thereby reducing ecological resilience, emergence of new infectious and non-infectious diseases, rising global ambient temperatures and climate change, threatening life itself. Human behaviour is at the root of these problems and modern western culture, seemingly incapable of changing and with current population growth, there is little choice. So why has this happened? It is argued here, that for various reasons, people became culturally, physically and mentally disassociated from nature, developing an incredible self-belief in human right to exploit and capacity for technological solutions, ignoring consequences. Humanity is at a crossroads. The solution to the crisis is in human hands, there is need for new politics, philosophy and science, careful analysis of trends and options to determine whether there are technological solutions or, society needs to turn society needs to turn toward a culture in tune with nature and sensitive to ecological limitations. We argue that the latter is the way forward, through restoration of functional ecosystems and a reappraisal of our place, a return to complex food chains but also including sustainable agriculture. With our knowledge of physics and biological systems this should not be impossible but for this there must be a complete paradigm shift and most probably lower human population.

